Durfee Mills
West corner intersection of Plymouth
Avenue and Pleasant Street
Fall River
Bristol County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-982

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

DURFEE MILLS

Location: West corner, intersection of Plymouth Avenue and Pleasant Street, Fall River, Bristol County, Massachusetts.
Geographic Location Code: 20 - 0320 - 005
Latitude: 41° 41' 55" Longitude: 71° 08' 52"

Present Owner: The Hull Company, 75 Sabine Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

Present Occupant: The buildings are currently occupied by several firms.

Present Use: Textiles and light manufacturing.

Statement of Significance: The Durfee Mills was the largest single firm of textile manufacturers in Fall River. During the 1870's the company produced 23 million yards of print cloth annually.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: 1866-1904.

2. Architect: Unknown.

3. Builder or contractor: Unknown.

4. Original plan and construction: No. 1 Mill, five and one-half stories (1866); granite, rectangular.

5. Alterations and additions: No. 2 Mill, five and one-half stories (1871); No. 2 Mill addition, five and one-half stories (1871-1875); office building, two and one-half stories (c. 1872); No. 3 Mill, five and one-half stories (1880); No. 1 boiler house, one story (1880); No. 1 picker house, three and one-half stories (c. 1880); No. 2 picker house, three and one-half stories (c. 1880); cotton house, one story (1887); weave shed near No. 2 Mill, two stories (1893); weave shed, center, two stories (1895); engine room at No. 2 Mill, one story (1904).

B. Sources of Information:

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Prepared by Robert M. Vogel and
Ted Sande
National Park Service
July 8-12, 1968; July 1971

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Durfee Mills, one of the more successful of the late 19th Century textile corporations, had the most impressive group of large mill structures in the city of Fall River. Begun in 1866 the central grouping of the No. 1 and No. 2 Mills together with the office building were completed about 1872.

   These buildings together with eight other buildings and additions were all built in the 19th and early 20th Centuries of locally-quarried granite. All of the original major structures are still standing.

2. Condition of fabric: Originally very well constructed, the buildings are still generally sound structurally. There is some evidence of decay in the major wood beams and the roof and floor planking in some of the buildings.

3. Existing buildings: The following buildings are on the site:

No. 1 Mill	5½ stories	built 1866
No. 2 Mill	5½ stories	1871
No. 2 Addition	5½ stories	1871-85
Office Building	2½ stories	c. 1872
No. 3 Mill	5½ stories	1880
No. 1 Boiler House	1 story	1880
No. 1 Picker House	3½ stories	c. 1880
No. 2 Picker House	3½ stories	c. 1880
Cotton House	1 story	1887
Weave Shed (near No. 2)	2 stories	1893
Weave Shed (center)	2 stories	1895
Engine Room at No. 2	1 story	1904

B. Building Materials

1. General: The exterior walls of all major buildings are of locally quarried granite. The major buildings which were built before 1885 have gable roofs (locally termed "barn"), approximately 7 to 12 pitch, originally wood shingled. The later structures have low pitched roofs.

2. No. 1 Mill:

a. Dimensions: 5½ stories, 72'-0" x 376'-8", with wing 44'-0" x 90'-0".

b. Foundations: Mortared granite down to bedrock.

c. Exterior walls: Locally-quarried gray granite; 3'-1" thick (first) to 1'-8" (attic). Interior of major walls are irregular mortared rubble; exterior faces are irregular ashlar with parged joints. The masonry on the corners and of the entire tower, is neatly-shaped squared ashlar, hammered finish on the edges.

Interior framing: Splined heavy-plank structural floor (10" x 3" or 4") on heavy wood beams (approximately 12" x 15") supported by regularly-spaced cast-iron columns, diameter 5-3/4" (first) to 4½" (fifth).

d. Openings: Exterior door openings have heavy granite lintels. Wood doors are not original. Several old 4'-0" openings have been recently widened to permit easier freight handling. Doors on the tower are 5'-0" by 10'-4".

Typical window openings have granite lintels; double-hung wood sash, twelve lights each sash. Typical opening size: 7'-6" (first), 6'-3" (fifth); 3'-2" wide. Wood sill 3", no stone sub-sill. Hinged wood sash, 3'-6" x 5'-0", skylights on the roof opened by hand-powered mechanical operators.

e. Roof: Gable (locally termed "barn") roof, approximately 7 to 12 pitch, originally covered with wood shingles set in a cement bed; now covered with asbestos-cement shingles. The present pyramid hipped roof ($6\frac{1}{2}$ to 12) on the tower was apparently altered from the original design which had a lower pitched roof.

The main roof of No. 1 Mill is framed with 3" x 7" rafters, 24" o.c., braced with vertical posts, diagonal struts and purlins; not a true truss form.

The roof overhang is 3'-10" with wood boxed cornice and solid wood decorative brackets.

The central stair tower is masonry of neatly-shaped squared ashlar, hammer finished on the edges. The large wood beam at the top and the spacious door openings at each floor permitted the hoisting of heavy machinery into the building. Wood louvers are used in the openings at the highest level. Photos dated 1916 indicate that originally the low-pitched hip roof was surmounted with a decorative wood parapet, panelled and pedimented. The more recent roof structure is anchored with iron rods to the masonry.

f. Floor plans: The large rectangular space on each of the five floors is undivided; the attic space is also open and is lighted with skylights in the roof plane. The floors are supported by two rows of regularly-spaced cast-iron columns. There is a stairway in the attached central tower, and also open stairs at each end of the building. The original freight elevator equipment is still in operation, but it is now powered by electric motors which drive the original machinery. In the center of the building there is a recently installed elevator.

g. Stairways: In the tower the open wood stair (19 risers per floor) has turned newells and spindles. The open stairs at the end of the building have boxed railings.

h. Flooring: One inch maple flooring, 4" in width, is laid over the structural planks throughout the mill.

i. Wall and ceiling finish: The granite walls are plastered on the interior face. On the underside of each structural plank there is a bead at the joint; no ceiling boarding is applied. The heavy structural beams are exposed. Cast iron columns are smooth-shafted, tapered, and have moulded bases and caps. The splay of the typical window is plastered, no wood trim. Doors are plain panelled, no moulds.

j. Mechanical equipment: Most areas are now lighted with fluorescent fixtures which have replaced the original gas fixtures.

Open steam pipe coils are still in use in the building for heating purposes. Toilet facilities, apparently added in the 19th Century, are now inadequate for the number of employees on most of the floors.

3. Office Building:

a. Dimensions: $2\frac{1}{2}$ stories with basement, 40'-1" x 63'-8".

b. Foundations: Mortared granite down to bedrock.

c. Exterior walls: Locally-quarried granite, neatly-squared ashlar, hammered finish on the edges. Wall thicknesses: 3'-0" (basement), 2'-6" (first), 1'-9" (second).

Second floor wood framing is supported on boxed-in wood columns. The second floor ceiling (attic floor) is hung from the roof truss.

d. Openings: The three exterior doors to the lobby are 6'-0" in width. On the second and attic floors there are 5'-0" doors for handling large equipment or furniture.

Typical window openings have pedimented granite lintels. Windows are double-hung, six lights each sash, 4'-0" in width, 7'-6" and 6'-10" in height.

e. Roof: The roof is a simple gable, approximately 8 to 12 pitch, originally covered with wood shingles set in a cement bed, now covered with asbestos-cement shingles.

The roof is framed with 3" x 7" rafters supported by purlins and trusses. Iron rods of the truss support the lower cord which carries the attic floor, allowing a full open space on the second floor.

The roof overhang is 2'-6" with boxed cornice and solid wood decorative brackets.

f. Floor plans: Entering the front or side doors there is a lobby with a counter, opening to a general office space. There are three small offices, and a vault (with floor, walls and ceiling of granite). On the second floor there was originally a single large space; wood partitions have since been added. A stair leads to the attic which was used for records storage.

g. Stairways: Near the front door a wood stair leads to the second floor, and at the rear of the building a steep wood stair leads to the attic.

h. Flooring: The floors on the main level are covered with linoleum. Hardwood flooring is on the second floor.

i. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings of the first floor are plastered. On the second floor the masonry exterior walls are rough plastered and the ceiling is exposed beams and planking.

j. Openings: Doors are six panelled, with heavy mouldings. The first floor windows have wood panelling on the splayed jambs; second floor windows lack panelling and trim. There is a heavily moulded ceiling cornice, and the ceiling is decorated with rosettes and pendants.

k. Mechanical equipment: The first floor is now lighted with fluorescent fixtures which replaced the original gas lighting fixtures.

The building is heated with steam radiators supplied by a boiler in the basement. Some of the cast iron radiators were probably installed with the original construction. Toilet facilities are in the basement.

C. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting and orientation: The mills were built on the south side of Pleasant Street on the north bank

of the Quequechan River. No. 1 and No. 2 Mills with their towers are symmetrically placed on either side of a large court with the centrally-placed Office Building at the entrance to the court.

2. Landscaping: The area was once attractively landscaped with walks, grass and trees. It is now used for employee parking and vehicular access.

3. Other decorative features: Along Pleasant Street there is an iron fence with massive granite posts at the entrances and at intervals. An iron fence, now removed, formed an oval enclosure at the entrance to the Office Building.

Prepared by Melvin M. Rotsch
Architect
Texas A & M University
August 1968

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This building was recorded as part of the New England Textile Mill Survey II; which was sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service, and the Smithsonian Institution. The project was assisted by the Merrimack Valley Textile Museum, North Andover, Mass.; the Fall River Historical Society; and the Bristol Community College, Fall River, Mass. It was the second of two summer surveys whose purpose was to record representative examples of the buildings of the New England textile industry.

The field work, historical research and record drawings were done in the summer of 1968 under the direction of Robert M. Vogel (Curator of Mechanical and Civil Engineering, Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution), Project Director; Professor Melvin M. Rotsch (Architect, Texas A & M University), Project Supervisor; and David L. Bouse (University of Nebraska), Peter S. Conrad (Yale University), Eric N. DeLony (Ohio State University), and Dennis W. Jacobs (University of Kansas), Student Assistant Architects.

Historic documentation and editing of the project data were done in the summer of 1971 by Ted Sande (Architect, University of Pennsylvania), under the auspices of the Historic American Engineering Record of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service.